

**COUNTERING ENEMY SPECIAL PURPOSE FORCES. AN
EVOLVING MISSION FOR UNITED STATES SPECIAL
OPERATIONS FORCES?**

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This study examines the potential utilization of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in support of a concept called "Counter-Special Purpose Force (SPF)" defined by the author as the employment of military or paramilitary forces to find, defeat, neutralize, or destroy the enemy's special purpose forces potential before it can be brought to bear effectively against friendly forces or friendly centers of gravity. This paper suggests that Army SOF supported by other service SOF, and in support of America's national military objectives, can best accomplish the Counter-SPF mission. To make this case, the study affirms that special operations and special purpose forces will continue to pose a threat to United States interests. The paper then researches the historical success of special purpose forces and cites two particularly vulnerable areas the United States military should be cognizant of the SPF threat: Rear Area Operations and the Urban Area. The study concludes that much of the successful methodology and characteristics employed in previous successful Counter SPF operations are found in the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). USSOCOM characteristics supporting this position are low visibility, low cost, maturity, interagency operability, linguistic ability, and cultural knowledge. Finally, USSOCOM, because of their unique operational capabilities and force structure are currently well suited and doctrinally appropriate to find and defeat enemy SPF.

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Preface

Countering Enemy Special Purpose Forces. An Evolving Mission for United States Special Operations Forces? The problem sets addressed in this monograph are not new and have been thoroughly recorded in history. The threat imposed by small bands of specially trained individuals has been with us since the dawn of man, are currently being fought against today, and will continue to exist in the future. How a nation chooses to attend to the problem (or fails to deal with the problem) will be determined by that country's unique circumstances.

Doctrinally, the United States military publishes the right words to counter enemy SPF in our rear areas and in the urban environment. However, the realities of force structure and advertised capabilities are not always congruent. Repeatedly during exercises, we “accept risk to our rear” or paint a favorable impression of our “robust” capabilities to address SPF threats. We may in fact be misleading ourselves.

I believe the intractable threats posed by enemy SPF can be addressed but will require a true acceptance of the problem and the commitment of the correct force structure. This monograph offers just one technique to counter enemy SPF.

I want to acknowledge the Special Operations Command Future Concepts Working Group who were kind enough to share the Counter-SPF topic with me and provide research assistance. I would also like to thank the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), COL (Ret) Glenn Harned, and my monograph director, COL Mike Sevcik. Finally and most importantly, special thanks to my wife who served as my best editor.

Abstract

Countering Enemy Special Purpose Forces. An Evolving Mission for United States Special Operations Forces? by Major Joe Whelan, United States Army Special Forces, 56 pages.

This study examines the potential utilization of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in support of a concept called “Counter-Special Purpose Force (SPF)” —defined by the author as the employment of military or paramilitary forces to find, defeat, neutralize, or destroy the enemy’s special purpose forces potential before it can be brought to bear effectively against friendly forces or friendly centers of gravity.

This paper suggests that Army SOF supported by other service SOF, and in support of America’s national military objectives, can best accomplish the Counter-SPF mission. To make this case, the study affirms that special operations and special purpose forces will continue to pose a threat to United States interests. The paper then researches the historical success of special purpose forces and cites two particularly vulnerable areas the United States military should be cognizant of the SPF threat—Rear Area Operations and the Urban Area.

The study concludes that much of the successful methodology and characteristics employed in previous successful Counter SPF operations are found in the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). USSOCOM characteristics supporting this position are low visibility, low cost, maturity, interagency operability, linguistic ability, and cultural knowledge. Finally, USSOCOM, because of their unique operational capabilities and force structure are currently well suited and doctrinally appropriate to find and defeat enemy SPF.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Government or the Department of Defense.

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
PREFACE	II
ABSTRACT	III
DISCLAIMER	IV
INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Problem Statement	5
Significance	7
Essential Definitions	9
HISTORICAL REVIEW	11
Pseudo Forces	14
Analysis	15
FUTURE SOF	17
United States SOF	17
Capabilities	18
Foreign SOF	19
CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES	22
ORGANIZATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	22
Composition	24
Interagency, Joint, and Combined Operations	25
Intelligence	26
Psychological Operations	27
Public Affairs	28
Fire Support	28
Military Working Dogs	30
Rear Battle	32
Conducting Rear Operations	33
Rear Area Conclusion	34
The Urban Environment	35
Urban Area Conclusion	36

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	37
Summary.....	37
Conclusion.....	39
Suggested further research.....	39
GLOSSARY.....	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	44
Books	44
Periodicals and Articles	44
Government Documents	45
Internet and Other Sources.....	47

Introduction

*"Only the dead have seen the end of war."*¹
Plato

Background

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the world has profoundly changed and our country faces an increasingly complex, dynamic and uncertain security environment. The facts and assumptions that have dictated United States military doctrine for years have also changed. The growth of free markets and the globalization afforded by the proliferation of international information systems continue to transform culture, commerce and global interaction. Global economic interdependence and political fragmentation, most noticeable in the last fifteen years, continue to shape and define the geostrategic landscape of the 21st Century. The socio/political/economic tensions associated with these changes and the shifting population demographics have fostered uncertainty and instability in the emerging multi-polar world.²

John F. Kennedy said it best in his 1963 State of the Union address, "The mere absence of war is not peace." With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, which predicated the end of the Cold War, the nature of conflict is different. Traditional *Airland Battle* doctrine and advanced technology

¹ Robert A. Fitton, *Leadership: Quotations from the Military Tradition* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990) 321.

² Center for Systematic Peace, "A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination, Movements, and Democracy"; available from <http://members.aol.com/cspmngm/cspframe.htm> Internet; accessed on 21 April 2001. Thirty-three red-flagged countries, most of them in Africa and Central Eurasia, are at serious risk of violent conflict and instability for the foreseeable future.

will not yield the dominance previously enjoyed by the United States military. Advanced technology is becoming more accessible as many of our enemies are closing the technology gap and finding solutions to mitigate United States lethality.³

Conflicts that attempt to defeat American national will through low technology means can expose the United States military's "Achilles heel." ⁴ United States strengths will necessitate our adversaries employing asymmetric means to exploit our weaknesses--asymmetric approaches are attempts to undermine United States strengths while exploiting potential weaknesses using methods that differ significantly from the expected mode of operations. ⁵ Examples of this technique include using obscurants to defeat laser-guided weapons, minefields to counter superior mobility, human shields to protect combatants or key military locations, fighting in urban areas amongst non-combatants, or using a rubber boat full of explosives to damage a United States naval vessel.

The Russian involvement in Chechnya demonstrates the difficulties a technically sophisticated force may face while fighting in urban terrain. The Russian army required tens of thousands of soldiers to defeat Chechnyan rebels numbering in the hundreds. The complexity of the urban environment coupled with the Chechnyan's mastery of the cities and their willingness to fight amongst the people marginalized the Russian military superiority. Ultimately, with blatant

³ Department of the Army, *TRADOC PAM 525-5—Draft* (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2000) 1-2.

⁴ In this context, the author feels that the U.S. Achilles heel is that the U.S. Army is trained and equipped to fight a conventional war—one that our adversaries will want to avoid at all costs.

disregard for civilian casualties and indiscriminate destruction, the Russians used their superior firepower to level the city of Grozny. The Russian technique, with its callous disregard for world opinion, is not a viable option for the United States. Likewise, current United States Army doctrine acknowledges that similar environments will diminish the use of some highly lethal weapon systems.⁶

Even though the operational environment has changed and despite the technological advances made by weapons engineers, war "...will remain a dirty, frightening, physically and emotionally draining environment in which death and destruction are the tools of the victor."⁷ Special Operations Forces are ideally suited for this new operational continuum-- one where observance of cultural sensitivities, keen intellect, and superior training will be principal concerns in selecting the appropriate United States military forces to accomplish the mission.⁸ As large conventional armies throughout the world are downsizing, SOF is expanding. SOF can serve as an economy of force to counter asymmetric tactics and free conventional forces for missions that are more traditional.

The United States investment in SOF is not unobserved. America's enemies also suffer from finite resources and are wisely choosing not to oppose the United States military in a conventional linear battle. Our adversaries see their own special purpose forces as an economy of force that can employ asymmetric means to render our technological superiority mute. These foes are aggressively

⁵ According to the 1999 Joint Strategic Review, asymmetric approaches are attempts undermine U.S. strengths while exploiting U.S. weaknesses using methods that differ significantly from the U.S. expected mode of operations.

⁶ *TRADOC PAM 525-5 (Draft)*, 1-2.

⁷ Joint Publication 525-5 Draft, (July, 2000) II-9.

developing their own SOF-like capabilities to counter the United State's military superiority.

Historians have documented the numerical discrepancies that small irregular forces can impact on conventional armies. During World War II, Tito and his Slavic partisans tied down nine German and ten Italian divisions. By the spring of 1994, the Greek guerillas managed to tie down six German and twelve Italian divisions while the Albanian guerilla movement required the attention of five Italian divisions and four German divisions.⁹ The Russian irregulars on the Eastern Front ultimately required the German army to commit twenty-four division equivalents to protecting their rear area.¹⁰

There is no one remedy to countering the challenges posed by enemy special purpose forces (SPF). Enemy SPF continue to pose a viable threat to United States interests—particularly to ports, lines of communications (LOC), critical infrastructure, and other vulnerable soft targets. It is also apparent the United States and its allies do not enjoy the luxury of huge land armies to counter the SPF threat. In order to counter the SPF threat, this paper will examine whether Counter-SPF should be addressed as an evolving mission for SOF. The author's intent is not to create an additional SOF mission, but to evaluate a capabilities void in United States doctrine.

⁸ U.S. SOF, *Posture Statement 2000* (2000) 35.

⁹ Thompson, 42.

¹⁰ Field Manual 19-1, 2-2.

Problem Statement

The year 2001 will be a pivotal year in the United States Army's evolution to meet the changing strategic environment. The Army transformation, although not yet clearly developed, will manifest itself as the Objective Force—a lethal and rapidly deployable force. Regardless of the specificity of the yet-to-be-developed Objective Force, low intensity conflict in the form of Stability and Support Operations (SASO) and Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) will continue to be the most probable mode of warfare our military forces will face in the immediate future. The ambiguity and complexity of these operations are a fertile breeding ground for enemy SPF operations.

The cornerstone of force projection military operations will be regional access whereas our enemies will employ counter-measures to prevent the establishment of friendly operational bases. Accordingly, air and sea ports become critical vulnerabilities. Once friendly forces arrive in the area of operations, they must be sustainable. With the dependence of modern armies on logistics, the United States Army's extended lines of communication (LOC) become a critical vulnerability. Without proper planning and preparation, our LOCs become lucrative high pay-off targets for our adversaries.

Similar to United States doctrine, enemy SPF will likely be the force of choice selected to attack air and sea ports to deny friendly access to the area of operations. SPF will further attack LOCs, forward bases, and logistics stockpiles to disrupt rear-area operations and thwart friendly forces freedom of movement in the rear.

This paper hypothesizes that the best force to kill enemy SPF is friendly SOF and this mission is consistent with SOF doctrine. The author further contends that insufficient importance is devoted to the threat posed by enemy SPF. In a traditional linear campaign, enemy SPF will most likely be found behind our forward line of troops in pursuit of soft targets. In the non-contiguous battlefield, “white” areas are those areas between different commands that permit enemy freedom of movement. Enemy SPF will be working in these “white” areas for the same soft targets. Presently, rear area operations doctrine is defensive in nature and when given the task to conduct “aggressive patrolling”, sufficient trained forces are normally not available. German commanders on the Eastern Front interviewed Post WW II confirm the vulnerability of this scenario and cite that SPF forces had freedom of maneuver and the ability to strike at their leisure.

Special Operations Forces are optimal for this operational environment and can be influential in supporting the conventional force. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) must continually evaluate the operational environment to assess SOF’s doctrinal compatibility with current and future missions, and then implement the appropriate changes to remain relevant. In order to better support the United States National Military Strategy, Special Operations Forces must have the appropriate doctrine, adequate training, focused leader-development, efficient organizations and the correct technology. SOF must forecast what will be needed for tomorrow and advocate those requirements today. Arguably, as one of the United States military’s most flexible and adaptable major commands, USSOCOM can expeditiously change to

counter evolving threats. During USSOCOM's activation ceremony on 1 June 1987, Admiral Crowe charged the new command with the responsibility to "...educate the rest of the military—spread a recognition and understanding of what you do, why you do it, and how important it is that you do it. Last, integrate your efforts into the full spectrum of our military capabilities."¹¹ Admiral Crowe's tasking is as true today as it was then as the Special Operations community continues to educate the conventional force on SOF capabilities and limitations as the force transitions to meet future threats.

Presently, SOF is charged with performing the principal missions of Counterproliferation, Combating Terrorism, Foreign Internal Defense, Special Reconnaissance, Direct Action, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs, Unconventional Warfare, and Information Operations.¹² Many of these missions are the direct result of adversary SPF actions and all nine of these SOF missions have application in a proposed Counter-SPF campaign. This paper examines the Counter-SPF capability shortcoming to determine if SOF should be the responsible agent to accomplish this mission.

Significance

Compared to the United States Army's conventional forces, SOF is an inexpensive and historically validated force multiplier. This fact is not lost on many of our adversaries as they hasten to develop their own Special Purpose

¹¹ Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., speech at the USSOCOM activation ceremony, (Special Operations Historical Studies Course Handbook, 2001) 6.

¹² Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, (Virginia, 1998) II-4.

Force (SPF) capabilities. Research validates that many of our adversaries are improving and growing their SPF capabilities.

The nature of future conflict will often preclude the meetings of powerful land armies as our adversaries employ non-linear and asymmetric approaches to achieving national and supranational objectives. The growth of our adversaries' SOF-like irregular forces suggests that United States joint doctrine address their capabilities and counter their intentions. The traditional linear battlefield had non-contiguous areas of operations in the rear. The future battlefield may be defined along non-contiguous lines of operations.¹³ Enemy SPF works best around the fringes of our conventional forces in these “white” areas and can exploit the seams that separate units. The Joint Rear Area and rear support commands are particularly vulnerable to enemy SPF exploitation.

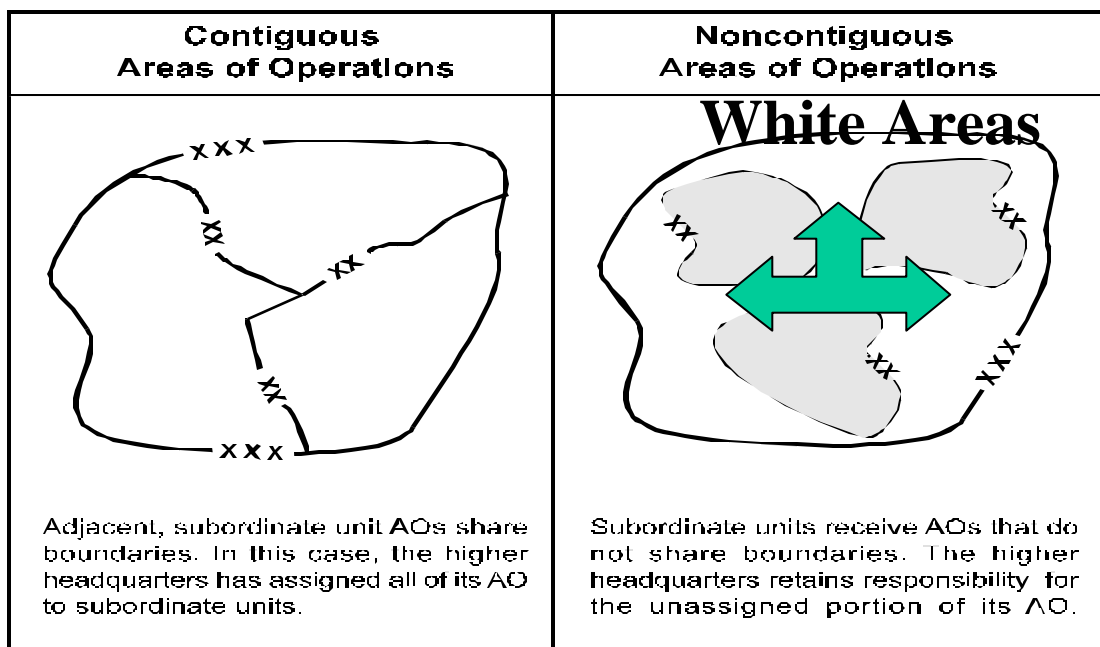


Figure 4-4. Contiguous and Noncontiguous Areas of Operations

¹³ Department of the Army, *ST 3-0 Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, USA Command and General Staff College, 1 October 2000) 4-19. Figure 4-4 is derived from the same publication.

The importance of coherent, relevant and timely doctrine cannot be underestimated. Doctrine establishes the accepted and understood standards on the application of military principles. More importantly, doctrine provides for the unity of thought, speed, and action that is necessary to achieve the unity of effort essential to all military operation. If current doctrine fails to address a capability shortcoming, then unity of action will be more difficult to achieve, and confusion evident. According to Colonel Wallace P. Franz:

“Military doctrine is a guide to action, one objective of which is to furnish a basis for prompt and harmonious conduct by the subordinate commanders of a large force in accordance with the intention of the senior commander. Doctrine develops from principles. Doctrine is also a guide to the application principles...(and) helps to span the difficulty between the understanding of principles and their application.”¹⁴

To answer whether Counter-SPF should be a SOF mission, this study will determine whether current doctrine sufficiently addresses the enemy SPF threat.

Essential Definitions

Agreement on the definition of terms is fundamental to any academic endeavor. Two critical terms that will be amplified here are *Special Operations* and *Counter-Special Purpose Force* (Counter-SPF.) A glossary of additional terms can be found at the end of the paper.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff defines Special Operations as

“Operations conducted by specially trained, equipped, and organized DoD forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national military, political, economic, or psychological objectives. These operations may be conducted during periods of peace or hostilities. They may support conventional operation, or they may

¹⁴ Colonel Wallace P. Franz. “Operational Concepts,” *Military Review*, Vol LXIV (July 1984) 3-4.

be prosecuted independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible.”¹⁵

Special purpose forces denote those military and or paramilitary forces that have SOF-like capabilities and missions. For the purpose of this paper, SPF will include irregulars, partisans, guerillas, saboteurs, terrorists, and special operations forces. This term will be used to differentiate between friendly SOF and enemy SOF. The author proposes the following definition of Counter-SPF *as the employment of military or paramilitary forces to find, defeat, neutralize, or destroy the enemy's special purpose forces potential before it can be brought to bear effectively against friendly forces or friendly centers of gravity.*

Normally, Special Purpose Forces are organized in small, flexible units capable of conducting operations with minimal logistical support and with extended lines of communication. Examples of SPF forces would include North Korean sniper teams, the former Soviet Spetsnaz, partisans, and other irregulars.

¹⁵ Department of the Army, Field Manual 31-20, *Doctrine for Special Forces Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 1990) G-10.

Historical Review

“When the hour of crisis comes, remember that forty selected men can shake the world.”¹⁶

Yasotay
Mongolian Warlord

Throughout history, groups have sought to achieve their goals with various elements of power that includes military actions. Declaring embargoes, setting up blockades, starting demonstrations of military capabilities, inciting and supporting insurgents, creating harassment at borders, carrying out incursions, and resorting to intimidation have long been a part of international affairs.¹⁷ This chapter will examine one tactic employed by belligerents, the employment of small and specially trained special purpose forces (SPF).

One of the earliest recorded examples of a conventional army beset by difficulties imposed by bands of special purpose forces was during Alexander the Great's march through Afghanistan on his way to India. Ancestors of today's Mujahideen harried his rear from horseback, while others attacked him from the heights. Alexander countered by employing many of the same counter SPF principles that hold true today—the employment of specially skilled, mobile light infantrymen. Alexander recruited and trained volunteer troops with mountain climbing experience who scaled the mountain peaks at night to surprise and

¹⁶ Quoted most recently in Robin Neillands, *In the Combat Zone: Special Forces since 1945* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997) 1.

¹⁷ CLIC Papers, *Operational Considerations for Military Involvement in Low Intensity Conflict* (Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, 1987) 4.

defeat those irregular forces. Further, Alexander recruited the defeated irregulars and added them to his army, frequently to be used against the next irregulars encountered.¹⁸ Other early special purpose forces include examples such as Rogers Rangers which formed as guerilla and counter-guerilla forces; General Nathaniel Greene encouraging Francis Marion and other irregulars to disrupt Cornwallis's lines of communication; the Duke of Wellington's proficient use of irregulars against the French Army during the Peninsular Campaign; and the Russian partisans that significantly contributed to Napoleon's loss of over 500,000 men in Russia.

The Twentieth century saw frequent utilization of SOF and other special purpose forces. During World War II, SOF was used unilaterally and in conjunction with conventional operations as a supporting effort for conventional forces. In the offense, SOF served as an accelerator to speed up the friendly main effort; in the defense they acted as a brake to slow down the enemy's advance; at all times they acted to isolate the enemy.¹⁹ Combat actions on the Eastern German front provide an excellent example of both the effectiveness of Soviet SPF (partisans specially trained by the Red Army) and those actions the German Army undertook to counter these forces.

The German Army, after its initial successes in Russia, soon found itself assailed from the front and the rear. The Soviet Union absorbed enormous losses before mounting their successful counterattacks. These counterattacks were supported by Soviet SPF comprised of partisans and regular Red Army

¹⁸ Leroy Thompson, *Dirty Wars, Elite Forces versus the Guerillas* (New York, Sterling Publishing Co, 1988) 17.

forces that operated deep behind the German armies.²⁰ The Soviet saboteurs were tasked with numerous responsibilities that included severing German rail transportation, ambushing communication outposts and other soft targets. These operations included airdrops, amphibious assaults, and deep penetrations by mobile forces, and attacks by partisans. The partisan threat, however, was the most frequent and enduring threat the Germans faced in their rear.²¹

The Germans responded to this rear area threat by forming platoon and company-sized mobile hunter-killer teams call Jagdkommandos. The Jagdkommandos were specially trained and equipped shock troops with the mission to adopt guerrilla tactics and techniques, living and fighting for extended periods without any external support, hunting down Soviet guerrilla bands, and employing raids and ambushes to destroy them. When the Jagdkommandos detected a large band of Soviet SPF, they would report its location so that a conventional German unit could attack and destroy it.²² These units, recruited from local foresters and hunters, had an intimate knowledge of the local areas. Much of the Jagdkommando tactics, techniques, and procedures can be found in SOF's FM 3-05.20 (FD), *Special Forces Operations*, chapter on its support of the rear battle.²³

Post World War II and the friction resulting from Western and Communist competition spawned numerous conflicts that employed special purpose forces.

¹⁹ Otto Heilbrunn, *Warfare in the Enemy's Rear* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963),177.

²⁰ Edgar M. Howell, *DA Pamphlet 20-244, The Soviet Partisan Movement* (Washington, D.C.: August 1956) 81.

²¹ Major Thomas J. Newman, *Rear Battle in the Future: Is our Doctrine up to the Task ?* (SAMS Monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS 1993) 20.

²² Major Glenn M. Harned, *Army Special Operations Forces and the Airland Battle* (MMAS Thesis, Fort Leavenworth, KS 1985) 126.

Many of these forces utilized the irregular tactics they learned during WWII to obtain their objectives. Leroy Thompson, in his book *Dirty Wars: Elite Forces Versus The Guerillas*, outlines over seventy-five conflicts post-WWII that involved the employment of special purpose forces. A few examples include the “Claret” operations fought by the British SAS in 1963-1965 against Indonesian SOF-trained guerillas; the South African special security forces fight against Namibia guerillas in 1976; and the Contras guerrilla war against the Marxist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua during the 1980s.

Pseudo Forces

A historically validated successful Counter-SPF technique has been the formation of “pseudo forces” derived either of indigenous groups or from invading forces. These irregular forces assume the identity of their enemy and infiltrate areas formerly forbidden under the axiom that the best force against irregulars are other irregulars. Their efficacy will be dependent upon many local factors but the Pseudo Forces concept bears discussion as a possible Counter-SPF tactic. The following examples depict some historical successes of “pseudo-groups”.

In 1900 during military operations in the Philippines, Arthur MacArthur recruited local troops as scouts and counter guerillas, infiltrated a rebel stronghold, and captured Aquinaldo, the rebel leader.²⁴

During World War II, some local German commanders on the Eastern front formed pseudo-partisan bands, which would infiltrate and then slaughter groups of partisans.²⁵

²³ Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20 (FD), Special Forces Operations*, 2-23.

²⁴ Thompson, 21.

²⁵ Ibid, 41.

In 1950, Force X was formed in the Philippines, as a pseudo-guerrilla force comprised of former guerrillas that defected to the government. These forces would infiltrate guerilla areas and proved particularly adept at ambushing Huk parties. Occasionally, some of the pseudos would be “captured” by police and put in jail, where they would gather even more information.²⁶

In 1954, the Kenyan counter-insurgency campaign used pseudo gangs to infiltrate and then kill or capture roving bands of Mau Mau. These groups were led by European officers in black face make-up and consisted of eight to ten members with at least two women (the Mau Mau gangs had female members). In general, pseudo did not receive pay, but shared reward for the terrorists they had captured/killed.²⁷

During the Vietnam War, the United States sponsored a pseudo-guerrilla organization called Road Runners. These teams dressed as Viet Cong and operated along infiltration networks to disrupt and ambush infiltrators.²⁸

Using “pseudo forces” has important psychological advantages as well. The ability to offer incentives such as amnesties and employment to lure guerrillas over to the government side tends to drain guerrilla morale. Additionally, turned guerrillas often bring valuable intelligence, as well as providing excellent propaganda material.

Analysis

Although, SPF operations are not normally decisive in any large-scale campaign, they have often served as important shaping operations that require attention and resources to counter. Many historical precepts are still relevant in countering enemy special purpose forces. To counter irregular forces, commanders had to be willing to make use of unorthodox approaches such as in the development of “pseudo forces” or Jagdkommandos hunter-killer teams. In

²⁶ Ibid. 65

Charles Calwell's *Small Wars* written in 1896, he suggests that for fighting guerillas, you must,

“...harry them and give them no time for rest; divide the theatre into sections to control food and popular support; have highly mobile, self-contained counter-guerilla forces ready to respond to attacks and to patrol against the guerrillas; gather good intelligence and have self-reliant, competent junior officers.”²⁹

The facets of mobility, intelligence, psychological operations and civil affairs are recurring themes that define nearly every encounter with special purpose forces and will be a part of the proposed Counter-SPF force.

²⁷ Ibid, 99.

²⁸ Ibid. 139.

²⁹ Ibid, 22.

Future SOF

*The battlefield does not begin and end where front line troops meet. It extends from the rear of our own troops—an enemy will see to that—to the remotest corner of his rear, and the forces of the rear contribute in their way to the outcome of a battle or campaign just as front line troops do...But regardless of the side of the front on which they are deployed, both forces are meant to contribute to the achievement of one and the same strategic aim.*³⁰

Otto Heilburn, *Warfare in the Enemy's Rear* (1963)

United States SOF

Future conflict will take many forms and SOF is equipped and configured to support the warfighting theater commanders throughout the spectrum of conflict and to help shape the United States strategic interests. To support these objectives, SOF is optimized to strike the enemy's critical vulnerabilities—oftentimes found in his rear area. Similarly, the United States possesses many of the same rear area vulnerabilities as those of our enemies. As a deployed force, the United States military is particularly sensitive to losses of any of our key support nodes such as seaports of debarkation (SPODs) and aerial ports of debarkation (APODs). Whether our Army is fighting a traditional linear battle or one of non-contiguous lines of operations, there will always be a rear support area. The inherent vulnerabilities of these rear support areas make them attractive targets for enemy SPF.

³⁰ Otto Heilbrunn, *Warfare in the Enemy's Rear*, (1963) Extracted from MAJ Glen Harned's 1995 Thesis *Army Special Operations Forces and the Airland Battle*.

Capabilities

The characteristics of United States SOF give them an extraordinary range of capabilities throughout the entire operational spectrum. Within the last decade, SOF have proven themselves from the mid to high intensity battlefield in Iraq performing direct actions, special reconnaissance to the nebulous Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) environment of Haiti and the Balkans. Presently SOF has nine principal missions and seven collateral activities. The nine principal missions are: Counterproliferation, Combating Terrorism, Foreign Internal Defense, Special Reconnaissance, Direct Action, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs, Unconventional Warfare, and Information Operations.³¹ The seven collateral activities are: Coalition Support, Combat Search and Rescue, Counterdrug Activities, Countermine Activities, Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, Security Assistance and Special Activities.³² It is not the intent of this paper to review all of the SOF missions here—SOF doctrinal manuals provide excellent sources for those who are interested. Instead, it will be more useful to highlight the most likely SOF missions that can best be employed to defeat enemy SPF. Unconventional Warfare (UW) and Foreign Internal Defense (FID) are the fundamental SOF missions that contribute to the Counter-SPF fight.

Unconventional Warfare serves as the core of Special Forces (SF) ideology. Unconventional Warfare is designed to organize, train, equip, advise, and assist indigenous and surrogate forces in military and paramilitary operations. Foreign Internal Defense is designed to “organize, train, advise, and assist host-nation military and paramilitary forces to enable these forces to free and protect their society from

³¹ Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, (Virginia, 1998) II-4.

³² Joint Publication 3-05, II-12.

subversion, lawlessness and insurgency.”³³ Both of these operations are normally of long duration.

Special Forces possess exceptional capabilities as trainers and advisers. Methods of instruction are a significant part of SF basic skills. Philosophically, America’s approach to assisting other nations in attaining stability is to work inside to outside, leaving the bulk of security requirements with the host nation. America has shown a reluctance, and rightfully so, in orchestrating unilateral military actions. Accordingly, this presupposes a greater focus on our allies and their support. Nations ultimately must resolve their own problems without intrusive and overbearing foreign intervention.

Foreign SOF

Modern conflict is often indirect aggression waged by indigenous groups with external sponsors. These groups use disinformation, subversion, terrorism, and insurgency to avoid combat between regular conventional armed forces.³⁴ The United States possesses such a capability with their SOF yet by no means retains a monopoly on special operations. Over seventy-four countries currently field military forces with special operations capabilities³⁵ Many more countries utilize civilian police forces for similar SOF-like operations. One hostile competitor, North Korea, is alleged to have a SOF force comprised of nearly 100,000 personnel and has developed a doctrine

³³ Joint Publication 3-05, II-6.

³⁴ Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 12 December 1991) 1-4.

³⁵ SPECWARNET, “Special Forces of the World”; Available from <http://www.specwarnet.com/biglist.htm>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2001.

designed to open up a “second front”, with the purpose of creating confusion, panic, and paralysis in the Republic of Korea’s rear area.³⁶

Potential adversaries closely observe United States SOF to replicate its capabilities. One example extracted from the Foreign Military Studies Office is revealing. A former director-general of India's Indo-Tibetan Border Police has proposed the creation of a special-operations force to deter cross-border terrorism in hostile, remote and culturally sensitive areas. The former director-general reviewed the advantages he had seen in Special Forces around the world, especially “*in low-intensity conflicts because [they are] a relatively low-cost and more effective option, compared with fielding large conventional forces.*”³⁷

A cursory literature review of the Foreign Military Study Office demonstrates the growth of SOF in selected countries. The enclosed list is by no means comprehensive but reveals the emphasis SOF is assigned in some countries.

“Malaysia is restructuring its special unit, the GGK, in an effort to improve its capabilities. The GGK, which is charged with combating terrorists, armed militants, pirates and other low-intensity threats.”

“A special forces unit that is being formed in the Democratic Republic of Congo may be receiving training from North Korean officers. The new unit, the 10th Special Infantry Brigade, consists of several thousand troops and supposedly has a combined-arms composition -- including reconnaissance, infantry, and artillery elements. The unit's primary purpose will be to fight rebel forces that have been active for the last two years in a conflict that now involves several neighboring states.”

“Mexico's Attorney General's Office has formed a new unit designated the “Special Unit for Dealing with Crimes Committed by Suspected Armed Civil Groups.” The new unit focuses on paramilitary groups.

“Mexican army force-modernization programs that were outlined in 1995 envision highly mobile units, including “special forces” components, based in each of the country's 10 military regions.”

³⁶ Special Operations.com, “North Korean Operations and the Second Front,” Available from http://www.specialoperations.com/Foreign/North_Korea/Second_Front.htm; Internet; Accessed on 21 April 2001.

³⁷ Dr. Graham Turbillville, “Foreign Special Operation Forces,” *Special Warfare*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring 2000)

"Japan is planning to develop a greater capability of dealing with the threat of terrorists and guerrillas."

"China has reportedly developed a force capable of carrying out long-range air-borne operations, long-range reconnaissance, and amphibious operations."

"Colombia has announced the creation of a 5,000-man counterinsurgency task force to deal with the increasing threat posed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC."

"The Finnish Ministry of Defense is reportedly preparing to train counter-diversionary troops -- temporarily designated the Utti Light Infantry--at a "special forces training center" near Valkeala in southeastern Finland. Beginning in the spring of 1997, the center plans to train 160 conscripts per cycle. Most of the conscripts will go to airborne units, but about 50 will receive training for "special task-force commando" units. In addition to jump training, the commando, students will receive instruction in countering enemy saboteurs, infiltrators and guerrillas."

"Germany is forming a special-forces group, the KSK, to perform a range of military missions in enemy rear areas or in trouble spots abroad. Unit missions may include operating against targets such as lines of communication or enemy headquarters."

"In mid-1996, the armed forces of the Philippines combined their Special Forces Regiment, First Scout Ranger Regiment, and Psychological Operations Group to form a new force designated the Special Operations Command. Comprising 5,000 men and women, the new organization serves as a rapid-deployment force, carrying out counter-terrorist missions and other special small-unit actions that draw on the urban counter-subversive skills of the Special Forces Regiment, the jungle-operations expertise of the Scout Rangers, and the techniques of the psychological-warfare elements."

"It was announced this summer that the Indonesian Army's Special Forces Command, KOPASSUS, would reorganize and *increase in size*, and that its commander, the son-in-law of the Indonesian president, would be promoted to two-star rank." ³⁸

Numerous operations involving SPF forces are ongoing. For instance, Macedonian Special Police units are fighting an Albanian-supported insurgency today. Another example from the *Manila Times* reports that the MILF (a Philippine insurgent

³⁸Dr. Graham Turbillville, "Foreign Special Operation Forces," *Special Warfare*, Series of volumes, available from <http://call.army.mil/fmso/sof/issues/summer00.htm>, accessed on 15 April 2001.

group) has ordered special operations group personnel to launch offenses against urban targets in Mindanao.

Critical Vulnerabilities

As previously identified, enemy SPF will seek to minimize United States military superiority with asymmetric means. The cornerstone of the United States forces projection military will be regional access. The threat will employ a strategy of operational exclusion where they attempt to limit our access or interrupt our operations.

United States vulnerabilities include APODs/SPODs, forward bases (air, land, and sea) logistics stockpiles, and secure LOCs. The threat will seek to prolong the conflict and avoid decisive battle. A perceived liability is the reluctance of its citizens to accept casualties. Accordingly, the enemy will attempt to produce United States casualties to weaken national will and resolve. These vulnerabilities can be easily exploited in the rear area and urban environment--operational areas particularly suited to enemy SPF as they attempt to exploit the "white" areas of the non-contiguous lines of operation.

Organization, Employment, and Operational Considerations

"Nothing succeeds in war except in consequence of a well prepared plan."³⁹

Napoleon I, 1769-1821

According to *FM 100-7 Decisive Force, The Army in Theater Operations*, commanders employ forces within the three states (peacetime, conflict, and war) of the

theater strategic environment. Army commanders, particularly at the operational level, operate with other services, government agencies, United Nations (UN) agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), private voluntary organizations (PVOs), and multinational partners.⁴⁰

Special Operations Forces routinely work within this theater strategic environment and can be used before, during, and after the introduction of general-purpose forces. Their special skills, specialized equipment and area orientation, coupled with their intelligence gathering capabilities, make them ideally suited to Counter-SPF. These forces have the unique capability to organize, equip, train, and direct indigenous forces to defeat enemy SPF. Additionally, SOF presence creates a much smaller “footprint” than conventional forces, as its force structure and logistics requirements are inherently smaller. A smaller footprint becomes increasingly important during politically sensitive operations in an attempt to minimize United States intervention and maximize the indigenous force efforts.

Several planning considerations will be discussed to amplify Counter-SPF concerns. Traditionally, a commander utilizes mission, enemy, troops, time, terrain, and civil considerations (METT-TC) during the estimate of the situation. To counter enemy SPF requires commanders to also recognize the unique aspects of intelligence preparation of the battlefield, political/military objectives, and tailored forces. Whatever the scenario, organizational flexibility and adaptability is essential in order to allow responsive action. This organizational flexibility begins with a command and control architecture that can plan and conduct operations in a fast moving and fluid environment. This paper will refer to this command and control organization as the Counter-SPF Center.

³⁹ Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, (Virginia, 1995) III-1.

⁴⁰ Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-7, *Decisive Force, The Army in Theater Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 31 May 1995) 1-1.

Composition

The composition of a Counter-SPF Center will be driven by the unique nature of the problem and the assigned mission. Similar to forming any joint task force, organizational flexibility is important. The precise force structure of the Counter-SPF Center is beyond the scope of this paper; however, the author recommends a SOF operational headquarters commanding SOF and general-purpose forces. United States military force structure would include SOF, infantry, civil affairs, psychological operations, aviation, military police, fire support, and combat service and combat service support units. An important augmentation to the Counter-SPF Center would be indigenous/host nation/coalition forces and the appropriate interagency personnel that would represent political military issues.

Adequate representation will have a direct impact on the ability of the Counter-SPF Center to coordinate a seamless security environment, identify shortfalls and resolve security issues. To better deconflict rear area movement and to coordinate with higher, lower, adjacent and allied command staffs, the Counter-SPF Center should carefully consider its command and control relationship and physical location. One recommendation for location would be within/adjacent the Combined/Joint Forces Land Component Commander's Rear Command Post or in concert with the Rear Operations Center.

Interagency, Joint, and Combined Operations

"Almost without exception, the United States will never again conduct a unilateral military operation."⁴¹

Barry McCaffrey (GEN Ret)

SOF has unique capabilities to fill in the operational void in civil-military operations. Working with foreign militaries that often are involved in functions or activities performed by civilian agencies in the United States, positions SOF to assist with interagency programs in foreign nations. Because SOF routinely operates as part of a joint SOF team, within a joint SOF command structure, it is well prepared to facilitate joint operations among any combinations and force types.⁴²

Host-nation support (HNS) enhances the abilities to United States forces to perform their mission.⁴³ One of the factors contributing to British and Malaysian success in their counter SPF fight in Borneo against the Indonesians was the effective use of a joint headquarters to control the military and police and a joint major logistical support center.⁴⁴

Counter-SPF activities could easily cross numerous lines of responsibility that require building a coherent Interagency, Joint, and Combined team. Ensuring a clearly understood chain of command is imperative. Once the recognized chain of command exists that guarantees unity of effort and economy of force, the sum of the parts of participating agencies and organizations can create powerful synergy.

⁴¹ Gen Barry MaCafery in a discussion with the SAMS 2001 class, 26 March 2000.

⁴² Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20 (FD), Special Forces Operations* (Fort Bragg, NC, USJFKWS, March 2001) 1-7.

⁴³ *Joint Pub 3-10.1, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Base Defense* (Fort Monroe 23 July 1996) X.

⁴⁴ Thompson, 128. The Borneo problem was not so much an insurgency as there was little popular support for the Indonesian incursion into Borneo. The Indonesian SOF essentially trained third party forces to infiltrate and conduct hostile actions in Borneo attempting to capitulate the government.

Intelligence

“Nothing is more worthy of the attention of a good general than the endeavor to penetrate the designs of the enemy.”

Machiavelli Discourses, 1517⁴⁵

The uniqueness of counter-SPF activities foresees operations that will depend upon timely, specific, and accurate all-source intelligence. Normal tactical and operational level intelligence assets are oriented toward the conventional threat. The all-source production section (ASPS) found in a Special Forces Group military intelligence detachment increases the scope of collection and integrates activities from the Signal Intelligence Section and Counterintelligence-Human Intelligence Section. Additionally, the military intelligence detachment can expand to facilitate the integration of various forces and agencies into a robust joint intelligence collection center.

The Counter-SPF intelligence systems will utilize a joint intelligence preparation of the battlefield (JIPB) approach. According to JP 2-10.3, JIPB is the process used to analyze the air, land, sea, space, weather, electromagnetic, and information environments as well as other battlespace dimension and determine the adversary's capabilities to operations in each. Whereas IPB focuses on the adversary's capabilities and vulnerabilities, JIPB uses a macro-analysis approach in order to focus on the adversary's known or postulated national and operational level multi-force component or “joint strategy”. Additionally, JIBP will also look at the non-geographical dimensions of the battlespace such as human thought, political, cultural and economic information.

Only persons completely familiar with the local situation and able to place events in proper context should interpret intelligence. The intelligence process should be continuous, aggressive, and responsive to current and projected SPF threats.

⁴⁵ *Joint Pub 2-1.0, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield* (Fort Monroe, VA, 24 May 2000) I-1.

Agreements and understandings with other governments and agencies should exist to allow for immediate access to current and detailed information.⁴⁶

Psychological Operations

Psychological operations are conducted before, during war or conflict, and at the conclusion of open hostilities in a defined geographic area to promote the effectiveness of the area commander's campaigns and strategies. Psychological operations are not merely supporting measures or propaganda efforts. They are principal ingredients of successful campaigns. Both military and nonmilitary actions should be considered in terms of psychological impact.⁴⁷

Psychological operations will comprise an essential shaping operation in defeating enemy SPF. There are many historical examples where PSYOP has persuaded many disaffected combatants to change sides. The converted combatants also serve as potential recruiting grounds for the aforementioned "pseudo-groups." In addition, the indigenous population will either provide sanctuary or expose our adversaries. PSYOP can assist in spreading the United States message and exposing the threat. The inability of the German high command to integrate PSYOP early on during their rear area fight on the Eastern Front allowed "...many points of difference between the occupiers and the occupied, often simple in themselves but with explosive possibilities when taken in aggregate, went unresolved."⁴⁸ PSYOP will assist in projecting a favorable image of United States actions to garner local support while marginalizing the enemy support base.

⁴⁶ CLIC Papers, *Operational Considerations for Military Involvement in Low Intensity Conflict* (Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, 1987) 4.

⁴⁷ *Joint Pub 3-53, Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations* (Fort Monroe, 10 July 1996) V.

⁴⁸ Edgar M. Howell, *Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-244, The Soviet Partisan Movement* (Washington, DC, 30 August 1956) 73.

Public Affairs

Images presented by the media significantly influence public opinion. Adversaries are often quite adept at manipulating the media to alter world or domestic opinion. Future operations which are likely to be politically charged also have an increased impact because of the immediacy of contemporary media reporting. The near-real-time transmission and broadcast of events can readily focus and influence world or domestic public attention on a specific issue. At the same time, it can provide a source of intelligence for belligerents. The German SS and their oppressive policies were the most effective organization for creating guerrilla forces in occupied Europe and Russia during WWII.⁴⁹

Public affairs can attract popular support and bolster a host nation's government while at the same time blunting or reversing collusion with insurgent elements.⁵⁰ Pancho Villa demonstrated a positive example of gaining popular support in 1913. When not fighting, he was astute enough to use his 8,000 troops on public works projects for the benefit of the peasants, thus consolidating their support.⁵¹

Fire Support

Fire Support will be addressed in the context of joint rear area fires. Currently, joint rear area fires doctrinal shortcomings require creative problem solving to a complex situation. Exacerbating this problem is that trained forward observers are not normally stationed in the rear and few soldiers in the rear are trained in adjusting artillery fire or terminating other fire support platforms. This paragraph will address three "non-

⁴⁹ Thompson, 37.

⁵⁰ CLIC Papers, *Operational Considerations for Military Involvement in Low Intensity Conflict* (Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, 1987) 4.

⁵¹ Thompson, 24.

traditional” Fire Support systems that may have utility in the Counter-SPF role—the AC-130, Army attack aviation, and indirect fires.

SOF retains significant firepower with their AC-130 gunships. Additionally, the night capabilities of the gunship, combined with its range and endurance make the gunship a viable reconnaissance platform which is particularly effective at night and in limited visibility because of its thermal imagery capabilities. The gunship has the capability to record all the sensors with audio and video imagery. The gunship is more vulnerable to enemy threats than other tactical reconnaissance platforms but is very effective in destroying point targets. AC-130 limitations include enemy air defense threat, weather, and daylight vulnerabilities.

Army aviation is uniquely suited to support the rear area Counter-SPF fight. Although traditionally employed in the deep attack and without a doctrinal close air support mission, Army attack aviation has much utility in the rear area fight. The Combined Forces Command (CFC) in Korea is implementing a novel concept to their Counter-SPF fight through their use of the Apache attack helicopters.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) maritime borders comprise over 85% of their country. North Korean (NK) SPF has previously demonstrated their opportunism to exploit this vulnerability by infiltrating SPF teams over water. The CFC now cross attaches Army AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, from its Ground Component Command (GCC), to its Naval Component Command (NCC) on a temporary basis, depending on the situation, to attack enemy maritime-SOF assets over the water before they reach ROK shores.⁵² The AH-64s have proven particularly adept at finding and intercepting boat traffic. Since the enemy’s maritime SOF teams are small and the vessels they ride in are point targets, the Apache crews are able to coordinate their fires with each other to prevent

⁵² “Using Innovation And Synergy To Solve A Very Real And Substantial Threat”

waste of ammunition and target overkill. Additionally, the Apache crews perform their own battle damage assessment (BDA).

Helicopters, as a direct fire platform have several advantages over artillery. Namely, helicopter fire is normally observed fire with the shooter possessing positive control over the final targeting decision, and helicopters are much more mobile and responsive. The primary helicopter limitation is weather.

The expansiveness of the Joint Rear Area and the elusiveness of the rear area fight require that indirect fire support be responsive and mobile. Normally, artillery is unable to range most of the rear area unless it displaces rearward. Heliborne-delivered artillery and mortar can be employed enabling artillery to rapidly displace to contentious areas. Depending on the proximity to the coastline, Naval surface fires can be particularly effective and responsive.

Military Working Dogs

Military working dogs (MWD) can serve as a valuable complement to Counter-SPF operations. Canine olfactory superiority, advanced hearing, and ability to detect movement offer significant military employment potential. When used properly, military working dogs are an inexpensive and efficient combat force multiplier—particularly in stability and support operations. History illustrates significant military contributions made by dogs and modern technology has not eliminated their operational potential for future conflicts.

Military working dogs are uniquely suited to assist SOF in supporting the Counter-SPF battle through Foreign Internal Defense and Unconventional Warfare. Military working dog employment offers some significant advantages—particularly in

developing nations that favor a less technological solution to problems that dogs can provide.

Training indigenous/host nation forces is an integral part of a geographic commander's engagement plan during peace. During conflict, indigenous/host nation forces are particularly important for many of the reasons already mentioned such as their knowledge of the geography, customs, and norms. The future of conflict suggests that normally, these operations will be conducted in developing countries that lack the technological sophistication of the United States. Local forces must be provided methods commensurate with their technologic capability.

Military working dogs can further augment the Counter-SPF mission, in supporting the following SOF principal missions of Counterproliferation, Combating Terrorism, Special Reconnaissance, and Direct Action. Additionally, dogs support the following SOF collateral activities of Coalition Support, Combat Search and Rescue, Countermining Activities, Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, and Special Activities.⁵³ Possible working dog employment options include tracking, force protection (psychological deterrence and early warning), countermining, booby-trap detection, crowd control, explosive detection, gunpowder detection (separating belligerents who recently fired/handled weapons from non-combatants), search and rescue, scouting and patrolling.

Currently, working dogs are utilized extensively by many other nations. One such unit was formed in 1992 by Sweden. Known as Bassak, the unit is tasked with defending Swedish naval installations, and protecting ships against attack by enemy SOF units. Bassak platoons are composed of six four-man squads. Each four-man

⁵³ Major Joseph F. Whelan, *Cry Havoc and Let Slip the Dogs of War, Special Operations Forces and Military Working Dogs* (SAMS Monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2000) 20.

squad will have one dog assigned to it.⁵⁴ The Swedish Air Force has a comparable capability that also employs dogs to counter enemy SPF infiltrations.⁵⁵

As the proximity to indigenous populations close and the identity of combatants and non-combatants blur, it becomes clear that non-lethal alternatives must be refined to combat our adversaries. The increased potential for conflict in urban settings creates an environment for collateral damage and civilian casualties that may preclude the use of high-tech firepower. Dogs offer low-tech and non-lethal capabilities that can be employed as a force multiplier and force protector while limiting damage and casualties.

Rear Battle

Battle Space represents the domain within which a commander will conduct operations. The space often extends beyond his operations area, and it may not be contiguous. It may also extend back to CONUS, to include the deployment and logistical systems that support Army operations in theater.⁵⁶ Successful rear security operations are critical in the rear area since it contains the lines of communications (LOCs), establishments for supply and evacuation, and agencies required for immediate support and maintenance of field forces.⁵⁷ According to FM 19-1, “while the rear battle cannot win the battle by itself, the Army can be decisively defeated by the enemy in the rear area even while it is winning elsewhere.”⁵⁸

In order to assist the planner in developing a rear area defense plan, joint doctrine identifies three levels of response to threat activities. Rather than focusing on the size or type of threat, these levels focus on the nature of friendly actions needed to

⁵⁴ SPECWARNET, “Special Forces of the World”; available from <http://www.specwarnet.com/europe/bassak.htm>; Internet; accessed on 1 April 2001.

⁵⁵ Interview with LTC Adolfsson, Swedish Army at Fort Leavenworth, 20 April 2001.

⁵⁶ Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-7, *Decisive Force, The Army in Theater Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 31 May 1995) 9-1.

⁵⁷ Joint Pub 3-10, *Joint Doctrine for Rear Area Operations* (Fort Monroe, VA, 28 May 1996) I-2.

counter the threat. The threats listed here provide typical examples of the types of threats that can be expected.⁵⁹

- Level I-Those threats that can be defeated by base or base cluster self-defense measures. Examples include agents, saboteurs, sympathizers, terrorists, demonstrators, and rioters.
- Level II-Those threats that are beyond the base or base cluster self-defense measures but can be defeated by initial response forces. Bases and base clusters are able to delay Level II threats until arrival of response forces. Examples include small tactical units, unconventional warfare and guerilla forces.
- Level III-Those threats that will probably target several friendly rear elements as part of a larger, coordinated effort, rather than individual, separate entities requiring a tactical combat force to defeat them. Examples include large tactical force operations that include airborne, heliborne, amphibious, infiltrations, and major air operations plus air, missile and nuclear, chemical and biological attack.

Conducting Rear Operations

Joint Rear Area (JRA) specified land area and security arrangements are determined by the Joint Force Commander (JFC). The JFC will normally appoint a Joint Rear Area Coordinator (JRAC) for coordinating and maintaining the overall security of the JRA. Counter-SPF operations will work in conjunction with the JRAC to ensure unity of effort and prevent duplication of effort. According to Joint Pub 3-10, *Joint Doctrine for Rear Area Operations*, key tasks of successful rear security operations are—

- Coordinating base/base cluster defense plans.
- Collecting, integrating, analyzing, and disseminating timely and accurate intelligence.
- Patrolling aggressively in coordination with the host nation, to intercept and defeat small threat forces before they close on their objective.
- Deploying forces sufficient to counter the enemy intrusion.

Regardless the spectrum of conflict in which conventional forces are engaged, the rear area will essentially resemble a low intensity conflict. Thus, many of the doctrinal principles of Unconventional Warfare and Foreign Internal Defense apply.

⁵⁸ Department of the Army, Field Manual 19-1, *Military Police Support for the AirLand Battle* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 27 December 1983) 2-1.

⁵⁹ Field Manual 3-50 (First Draft), 31 July 2000

Indeed, *Field Manual 3-05.20 (FD), Special Forces Operations* provides the doctrinal template to support rear operations when it says,

“When directed, SF organizes, trains, and directs HN military or paramilitary forces to conduct offensive rear operations against unconventional rear area threats. These forces operate in platoon or company strength in the remote areas of the friendly rear area. They often adopt counterinsurgent organizations, tactics, and techniques. Their activities include; patrolling likely and suspected base areas; employing raids and ambushes; establishing ambushes along likely hostile infiltration routes; reacting to hostile attacks by trailing and hunting down the attackers.”⁶⁰

Rear Area Conclusion

Few combat support and combat service support units are able to train their soldiers adequately on combat tasks such as security patrolling, use of weapons and battle drills while successfully executing their primary sustainment missions. This lack of combat skill training, when coupled with weapons and communications gear shortages, makes self-defense and extraordinarily difficult task. The task is further exacerbated by the dispersed locations of small smaller units such as communications relay sites and by the expansiveness of the joint rear area.

The dependence on military police and traditional rear area units to defeat and contain threats that exceed the capabilities of the base defense plan poses many problems. There are too many missions and too few weapons and soldiers. Counter-SPF rear area operations can complement the JRAC plan by organizing a coherent offensive Counter-SPF plan that includes general-purpose forces and indigenous tactical combat forces and police forces. Typical Counter-SPF missions will be based on SOF doctrinal UW and FID missions.

⁶⁰ Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20 (FD), Special Forces Operations*, 2-23.

The Urban Environment

“Best Policy in war—thwart the enemy’s strategy, second best—disrupt his alliances through diplomacy, third best—attack his army in the field, worst strategy—attack walled cities.”

Sun Tsu, *Art of War*

The last decade witnessed urban fighting in places such as Sarajevo, Grozny, Mogadishu, Port-au-Prince, Kinshasa and Panama City. Many futurists, political strategists, and demographers contend that future conflicts and subsequent military operations will continue to migrate to the cities. Belligerents will seek to mitigate United States military superiority by utilizing urban terrain and hiding amongst non-combatants. Counter-SPF operations will be paramount.

Urban operations will span the continuum of conflict to which General Charles Krulak has described as a “three-block war”. Simultaneously, one section of the city can be conducting humanitarian assistance, one section conducting peacekeeping operations, and another section fight a highly lethal mid-intensity battle.⁶¹ Such operations will require the correct types of forces. For instance, there will be substantial difficulties for forces relying heavily on armor or firepower because those assets cannot be easily used or used to their full advantage in such scenarios. Indeed, they may be counterproductive creating their own vulnerabilities as the Russians discovered in 1995 during the Chechnya conflict when their initial entry brigade lost 800 of 1000 men, twenty of twenty-six tanks, and 102 of 120 armored vehicles.⁶²

The urban environment is a veritable “breeding ground” for irregular forces such as those that fought (and are still fighting) the Russians in Chechnya. Enemy forces operating in urban areas can engage in a wide variety of asymmetric methods to slow

⁶¹ Charles C. Krulak, “The Three Block War: Fighting in Urban Areas,” presented at national Press Club, Washington, D.C., 10 October 1997, *Vital Speeches of the Day* (15 December 1997): 139.

⁶² Timothy L. Thomas, “The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat,” *Parameters* (Vol. XXIX, No. 2, Summer 1999): 87.

the tempo of military operations, create large number of friendly casualties, and through a variety of barbaric means, attempt to break the will of the American people to continue the fight. Rather than seeking to achieve victory, the enemy needs only to avoid defeat.

63

The urban environment can be an ideal unconventional battlefield for SOF. Friendly SOF can frustrate enemy urban efforts by enlisting the support of the indigenous population. According to FM 100-25 *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, SOF, with assistance from attached or supporting Military Police and Counter-Intelligence personnel, advises and assists indigenous forces engaged in urban area operations. The United States will not be able to administer the “blunt sword” that the Russians used in Chechnya and will have to employ sophisticated measures to rid an urban environment of hostile forces. The Russians lost a great deal of support in Grozny with their indiscriminate employment of fire and callous disregard for civilians and collateral damage. Those that favored Russian intervention would have been a good foundation for an unconventional warfare operation.

Urban Area Conclusion

In keeping with Sun Tzu’s beliefs, attacks on cities or defense of them can be counterproductive to the political strategy of one or both of the belligerents.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, urban combat may not be avoidable for future operations.

The Chechnyan force that caused such considerable damage to the Russian attackers were not a trained conventional army but a force of regulars and guerrillas

⁶³ Robert F. Hahn II and Bonnie Jezior, “Urban Warfare and the Urban Warfighter of 2025,” *Parameters* (Vol. XXIX, No. 2, Summer 1999): 76.

⁶⁴ Stephen J. Blank. *Afghanistan and Beyond: Reflections on the Future of Warfare* (Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College, 1993): 38.

equipped with a belief in their cause.⁶⁵ SOF can complement conventional operations as they isolate the urban area both externally and internally and assist in identifying the locations of key nodes and enemy positions within the city. Through intensive intelligence collection and cultivating allied support within the city utilizing unconventional tactics and employment of PSYOP and Civil Affairs, SOF can counter the enemy's asymmetry.

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

The United States military's conventional superiority has driven our adversaries to consciously turn to asymmetric tactics as a means to weaken United States resolve and threaten her interests. Oftentimes, asymmetric actions require execution by specially trained small units employing irregular methods. These forces are called Special Purpose Forces (SPF) and appear to be increasing in number and capabilities throughout the world.

Two areas where enemy SPF can be particularly effective and where the United States is particularly vulnerable are the rear and urban areas. The rear area battle is fought while constantly balancing combat power dedicated to defending the rear area and acceptance of risk. Whereas the joint rear area is normally expansive, Counter-SPF forces should accept that not all the territory can be controlled and concentrate on mobility and intelligence. Current doctrine calls for response forces and combat forces to join the fight only after the identified danger exceeds the defensive capabilities of the

⁶⁵ Thomas, 87.

threatened unit. Clearly, a unit under attack is in dire straits once it is determined that the enemy is too strong to defeat.

Current SOF doctrine makes provisions for supporting the rear fight and advocates an offensive rear battle. Through accurate enemy intelligence, aggressive patrolling, mobile hunter-killer teams and the use of irregular tactics and techniques such as employment of pseudo forces, the initiative can be wrested from the enemy. ST 3.0 *Operations* refers to this as maintaining momentum and it is derived from pressure, focus and controlling tempo. ST 3.0 further advocates that tempo promotes surprise and can compensate for a lack of forces.⁶⁶ United States SOF forces in Vietnam used a similar concept with their use of small reconnaissance teams that were tasked with intelligence gathering, hunter/killer raids and other missions. If they found large enemy concentrations, a mobile strike force reaction element (Mike Force) would be called to destroy the threat.⁶⁷

Counter-SPF should not be an independent effort conducted in isolation but should be in conjunction with the larger conventional force. In the rear area battle, the proposed Counter-SPF Center should be co-located with the JRAC commander to facilitate coordination with the various base cluster defenses. The center should have a force structure and a sufficient C4I architecture to support the force. The center should be augmented with sufficient general purpose and indigenous forces and interagency representation to defeat templated SPF.

In the urban fight, SOF should be collocated with the lowest level operational commander to ensure a sufficient broad focus on the Counter-SPF problem. SOF as the operational commander and with operational control of general-purpose troops as the

⁶⁶ Department of the Army, Student Text 3.0, *Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 01 October 2000) 6-11.

⁶⁷ Thompson, 141.

tactical means could create a dynamic and synergistic effect to defeat enemy SPF while protecting the force.

Conclusion

This purpose of this paper was to examine the Counter-SPF capability shortcomings to determine if SOF should be the responsible agent to accomplish this mission. The employment of SOF is not the only solution to countering enemy SPF, but SOF, because of their unique capabilities and characteristics have an extraordinary and recognized potential for working in this realm. Meeting these challenges is a difficult but achievable task. It requires an institutionalized understanding that moves away from thinking and acting in a manner appropriate to more traditional forms of conflict.

There is little reason for delaying the employment of SOF Counter-SPF forces in the rear and urban areas. Winning the Counter-SPF fight requires a comprehensive plan for all United States military and affected civilian agencies. At present, SOF is most suited to lead the Counter-SPF effort. According to Gulio Douchet, "Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who want to adapt themselves after the change occurs."⁶⁸

Suggested further research

During this monograph's production, several other related topics came to surface. The author feels these topics warrant additional research and are included below for further discovery:

⁶⁸ Gulio Douchet, *The Command of the Air*, extracted from *The DIM MAK Response of Special Operations Forces to the World of 2025: Zero Tolerance/Zero Error*, Cadre Paper U.S. Air Force (1996) 2.

- Conduct a comparative analysis of Special Forces doctrine in FM 31-20 *Doctrine for Special Forces Operations* and compare it against FM-3.0 *Operations*. Ensure SF doctrine is nested within the Army doctrine.
- Special operations forces can conduct Counter-SPF and current doctrine provides for SOF employment in the rear area fight. However, should SOF conduct Counter-SPF and is it the best use of U.S. assets?
- Conduct a doctrinal review of rear area joint fires to facilitate their integration into a Counter-SPF program.
- Review the manning requirements of a Counter-SPF Battle Operation Center and the necessary force structure. Consider resident forces such as interagency representation, PSYOP, Civil Affairs, Aviation, Fire Support, Infantry, Host Nation/Indigenous Forces, Military Police, and Combat Service Support and Combat Service forces.
- Review C2 architecture for a SOF led Counter-SPF operation. Where is the optimal place to locate and subordinate its activities? At the CINC, JFLCC, JSOTF, ARFOR, etc.
- Review SOF support for Urban Operations. What are the best ways that SOF can contribute to this operational area?

Glossary

AT	Antiterrorism	JRA	Joint Rear Area
BDA	Battle Damage Assessment	JRAC	Joint Rear Area Coordinator
CA	Civil Affairs	JCO	Joint Commission Observer
CBT	Combating Terrorism	MOOTW	Military Opn Other Than War
CD	Counterdrug	MWD	Military Working Dog
CFC	Combined Forces Campaign	MWDT	Military Working Dog Team
CM	Countermine	NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
CP	Counterproliferation	PSYOP	Psychological Operations
CPO	Chief Petty Officer	SA	Special Activities
CT	Counterterrorism	SAR	Search and Rescue
CSAR	Combat Search and Rescue	SASO	Stability and Spt Operations
DA	Direct Action	SF	Special Forces
DOD	Department of Defense	SO	Special Operations
FID	Foreign Internal Defense	SOF	Special Operations Forces
HN	Host Nation	SPF	Special Purpose Forces
IO	Information Operations	SR	Special Reconnaissance
IRF	Immediate Reaction Forces	UW	Unconventional Warfare
JFC	Joint Force Commander		

Air Interdiction (AI): Air operations conducted to destroy, neutralize, or delay the enemy's military potential before it can be brought to bear effectively against friendly forces at such distance from friendly forces that detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of friendly forces is not required. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Civil Affairs (CA): A SOF principal mission that facilitates military operations and consolidate operational activities by assisting commanders in establishing, maintaining, influencing, or exploiting relations between military forces and civil authorities, both governmental and non-governmental, and the civilian population in a friendly, neutral, or hostile area of operation.⁶⁹

Close Air Support (CAS): Air action by fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft against hostile targets which are in close proximity to friendly forces and which require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces. Also called CAS. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Coalition Support: A SOF collateral activity that integrates coalition units into multinational military operations by training coalition partners on tactics and techniques and providing communications.⁷⁰

Counterinsurgency are those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat subversive insurgence. (JCS PUB 1)

⁶⁹ Joint Publication 3-05, II-9.

⁷⁰ Ibid., II-11.

Counterproliferation (CP): A SOF principal mission that combats the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons across the full range of U.S. efforts, including the application of military power to protect U.S. forces and interests; intelligence collection and analysis; and support of diplomacy, arms control, and export controls. Accomplishment of these activities may require coordination with other U.S. government agencies.⁷¹

Information Operations (IO): A SOF principal action taken to achieve information superiority by affecting adversary information and information systems while defending one's own information and information systems.⁷²

Insurgent: A member of a political party who rebels against established leadership. (JP 1-02)

Insurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict. (JCS PUB1)

Internal Security Forces: Organizations such as national police forces or border guards who have a wartime role in their nation's defense, possibly augmenting the regular armed forces or conducting counter-insurgency operations. (FM 100-66)

Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW): Operations that encompass the use of military capabilities across the range of military operations short of war. These military actions can be applied to complement any combination of the other instruments of national power and occur before, during, and after war.⁷³

Psychological operations: A SOF principal mission to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives by conducting planned operations to convey selected information to foreign audiences to influence their emotion, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of foreign government, organization, groups, and individuals.⁷⁴

Recovery Operations: Operations to locate, recover, and restore personnel, or material held captive, isolated, or threatened in areas sensitive, denied, or contested to friendly control. These operations employ unconventional tactics, techniques, clandestine search, indigenous assistance, and the frequent use of ground combat elements.⁷⁵

Security Assistance: A SOF collateral activity that provides training assistance in support of legislated programs which provide U.S. defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services by grants, loans, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies or objectives.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Ibid., II-10.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Joint Staff, "Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia," (Washington D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997) 513.

⁷⁴ Joint Publication 3-05, II-9.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Security and Support Operations (SASO): The use of military capabilities for any purpose other than war.⁷⁷

Special activities: A SOF collateral mission subject to limitation imposed by Executive Order and in conjunction with a presidential finding and congressional oversight, plan and conduct actions abroad in support of national foreign policy objectives so that the role of the U.S. government is not apparent or acknowledged publicly.⁷⁸

Special Operations Forces: Those active and reserve component forces of the military Services designated by the Secretary of Defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also, called SOF. (Joint Pub 1-01.)⁷⁹

Terrorist: An individual who uses violence, terror, and intimidation to achieve a result. (JP 1-02)

Unconventional Warfare: UW includes guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, evasion and escape, and other activities of a low visibility, covert, or clandestine nature. When UW is conducted independently during conflict or war, its primary focus is on political and psychological objectives. When UW operations support conventional military operations, the focus shifts primarily to military objectives.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Department of Army, *FM 101-5 Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997) 1-143.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ SOF will be used extensively throughout the paper and unless specifically identified, topics will pertain to Army, Navy, and Air Force special operations personnel.

⁸⁰ Joint Publication 3-05, II-9

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